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Frontier Knowledge for Future Gain: Why the European Research Council Matters

A British Academy Brexit Briefing

Executive Summary

The European Research Council (ERC) is a world-leading mechanism for frontier research, which has brought immense benefits to the UK. This briefing sets out the vital role, relevance and impact of the ERC for the UK research base. It concludes that it will be virtually impossible to replicate a comparably recognised, successful and transformative body. Once the UK leaves the EU, the UK should therefore seek to achieve the status of an Associated Country to EU Framework Programmes for Research and Innovation, which include the ERC. An option the UK Government has now requested in the negotiations with the EU.

The ERC is critically important for the UK research base because:

- It supports excellence in frontier research and is open to the best researchers from anywhere in the world, at a scale far beyond that of national agencies such as UK research councils, particularly in the humanities and social sciences;
 - Its focus is on high-risk, high-gain research ideas and enables the development of international teams and collaborations at a scale, and in an interdisciplinary way, that is not replicable domestically, particularly in the humanities and social sciences;
 - Its grants provide a global visibility, public profile and international prestige that cannot be created by domestic schemes in isolation. These have a major impact on award holders' careers, employability and access to international research networks;
 - Given that currently around half of all UK-based ERC award holders are non-UK nationals, many of whom have moved to the UK with their award,
- there is a risk of a major outflow of international research talent, and researchers are less likely to consider the UK as a destination for research careers. In the future, outstanding researchers here in the UK, including UK nationals and residents, will be forced to look for opportunities in other countries that can host ERC awards adding to the negative impact on the UK research environment;
- It has significant lasting effects for the networks of award holders and institutions, including a catalytic effect in attracting other researchers, particularly early career, to build their careers in the UK;
 - This scale supports a level of ambition complemented by flexibility that is highly attractive to outstanding researchers. Currently the ERC enables such researchers to flourish here in the UK, further strengthening UK research excellence in an increasingly international world of research;
 - It brings a diversity to the UK research base not only in award holders but also in UK institutions' research cultures and practices, including involvement in ERC research assessment and evaluation, which provides global leadership opportunities for the UK research community;
 - Its emphasis on the early career has enabled the UK to continue to attract the very best globally even against competition from the USA and it has had a strong progressive role in developing the careers of women, particularly early and mid-career researchers;
 - The UK has performed outstandingly well in the ERC's funding competitions, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, where UK-based award holders have won more than a third of the awards to date. From 2007-15 this accounted for €626 million of funding including significant institutional support.

Introduction

As the UK prepares to leave the EU, there are many implications, and potential scenarios, for the future of UK research, including in the humanities and social sciences.¹ This briefing will focus on one part of this uncertain landscape, the European Research Council (ERC).

This briefing has been very helpfully informed by the responses of 129 former and current ERC award holders in the humanities and social sciences in the UK in correspondence with the British Academy. We are grateful to them for their time and reflection.²

Background

The ERC has been operational for just over a decade. Its mission is to encourage the highest quality researcher-driven frontier research in Europe across all academic fields. Its awards are made on a competitive basis and are decided upon solely through research excellence. In the current EU Framework Programme, Horizon 2020, running from 2014-2020, of which the ERC is a central part, the ERC has a budget of €13 billion, which is 17% of the entire Horizon 2020 budget.

Since 2007, the ERC has funded more than 8,600 projects and award holders from 73 different nationalities hosted in 34 different EU Member States and Associated Countries. This has led to

more than 113,000 publications, more than 1,000 prestigious prizes received by award holders, and more than 50,000 researchers hired on ERC awards teams.

To be fully part of the European Research Council, it is necessary to be an EU Member State or an Associated Country to Horizon 2020, which from 2021 will become Framework Programme 9 (Horizon Europe).³ Other countries that have only very limited involvement in EU Framework Programmes, known as ‘Third Countries’, are not able to be part of the ERC. The UK must therefore become an Associated Country to EU Framework Programmes if it wishes to maintain full involvement in the ERC.

Ten national agencies outside the EU that are Third Countries, including the USA, South Korea, Mexico, India and South Africa, have signed implementing agreements with the ERC. These agreements solely allow for nationals of these countries to apply to join existing ERC awards if those awards are interested in hosting young scientists from those countries. There are differences between the agreements but generally speaking the host national agency covers the existing costs of their relevant national candidate, such as grant and stipend, whilst any relevant expenses to do with the ERC award are covered by the existing ERC grant. This is a good opportunity, particularly for young scientists, but is clearly very far removed from the ability to host full ERC awards, which the UK currently enjoys.

¹ *Brexit means...? The British Academy's Priorities for the Humanities and Social Sciences in the Current Negotiations*, November 2017, <https://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Brexit%20Means...TheBritishAcademy%27sPrioritiesForTheHumanitiesandSocialSciencesInTheCurrentNeogtiations.pdf>

² The author would also like to thank those who provided comments and review on earlier versions of this briefing.

³ British Academy, *Associated countries and third countries linked to EU framework programmes*, <https://www.britac.ac.uk/sites/default/files/British%20Academy%20Association%20Factsheet%20Types%20of%20Association%20to%20EU%20Framework%20Programmes.pdf>

All ERC award holders must be based in an institution within the EU or an Associated Country. If you are based outside these countries, you must relocate to an institution in such a country in order to be eligible. All ERC awards are also made to the individual rather than an institution. This means that the grant is portable. During the award the award holder can move to any other institution if they so deem necessary, subject to the approval of the ERC and a clear rationale for wishing to do so.

UK-Based Researchers and the ERC

From 2007-15 UK-based researchers in the humanities and social sciences secured some €626 million from Starting, Consolidator and Advanced Grants from the ERC. The sum won by UK-based researchers in the humanities and social sciences through the ERC represents 33.2% of all the funding

The ERC's focus on frontier research allows researchers to identify new opportunities and directions in any field of research, rather than being led by priorities set by funding agencies. The aim is to recognise the best ideas, and confer status and visibility on the best researchers in Europe, while also attracting talent from outside Europe. The ERC achieves these aims through five main grant schemes:

- **Starting Grants** which support researchers at the early stage of their careers (2-7 years after a PhD), with the aim of providing working conditions enabling them to become independent research leaders. Funding of €1.5 million over 5 years is available, on top of which €0.5 million is available for start-up costs.
- **Consolidator Grants** which support researchers who are at a slightly later stage of their careers (7-12 years after a PhD) but often are already working with their own group. Funding of €2 million over 5 years is available, on top of which €0.75 million is available for start-up costs.
- **Advanced Grants** which support outstanding and established research leaders (track record of achievements in last 10 years) by providing them with the resources necessary to continue the work of their teams in expanding the frontiers of scientific knowledge. Funding of €2.5 million over 5 years is available, on top of which €1 million is available for start-up costs.
- **Proof of Concept Grants** which offer ERC award holders the possibility to establish the innovation potential of ideas stemming from their existing ERC grants, helping them bridge the gap between research and social or commercial innovation. Funding of €150,000 over 18 months is available.
- **Synergy Grants** which support a group of two to maximum four Principal Investigators working together and bringing different skills and resources to tackle ambitious problems. Funding of €10 million over 6 years is available, on top of which €4 million is available for start-up costs.

that was available in the humanities and social sciences. This is a far higher proportion of their funding than UK-based academics won in the life sciences (19.7%) or the physical and engineering sciences (19.8%), although UK performance was also strong in those disciplinary areas.⁴ This funding also provides considerable support to UK institutions, particularly compared to some domestic funding.

The €626 million secured by UK-based academics in the humanities and social sciences amounts on average to €69.556 million per year. As a rough comparison, the Economic & Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Arts & Humanities Research Council (AHRC) entire budgets from 2011-16 in average per annum terms were almost £257.5 million.⁵ Thus the funding won by UK-based researchers in the humanities and social sciences from the ERC (just one part of Horizon 2020) was equivalent to 24% of the average annual ESRC and AHRC budgets combined. AHRC and ESRC, however, provide a range of funding modes. The amount dedicated by them to responsive mode postdoctoral funding has been in average per annum terms almost £75.8 million, and thus ERC funding has reached about 80% of the postdoctoral responsive mode funding by AHRC and ESRC each year.⁶ It should be noted that AHRC and ESRC do

also provide postgraduate funding, whereas the ERC is solely postdoctoral. This, however, emphasises the importance of having a mixed funding system.

This additional resource secured by UK-based researchers in the humanities and social sciences illustrates the international excellence of UK-based researchers in these areas in gaining competitive grants. The equivalent figures for the life sciences and the physical and engineering sciences (the other two disciplinary categories the ERC uses) in comparison with the entire Medical Research Council and the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council as the equivalent life science funders in the UK, and the Natural Environment Research Council and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council as the equivalent physical science and engineering funders come to around 8.5% (compared to the 24% figure above).⁷

In recent rounds of the Starting Grants, Consolidator Grants and Advanced Grants, it is possible to continue to observe UK-based researchers' international competitiveness and excellence in the humanities and social sciences. In the 2016 Starting Grants round, 34.1% of the awards went to UK-based researchers in the humanities

4 Aggregate data regarding ERC-funded projects provided by the ERC Executive Agency.

5 Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 'The Allocation of Science and Research Funding 2011-12 to 2014-15', December 2010, p.17, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422477/bis-10-1356-allocation-of-science-and-research-funding-2011-2015.pdf; Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 'The Allocation of Science and Research Funding 2016-17 to 2019-20', March 2016, p.6, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/505308/bis-16-160-allocation-science-research-funding-2016-17-2019-20.pdf

6 AHRC and ESRC Annual Accounts from 2011-12 to 2016-17: <https://esrc.ukri.org/news-events-and-publications/publications/corporate-publications/annual-report-and-accounts/> and <https://ahrc.ukri.org/newsevents/publications/annualreportandaccounts/>

7 Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 'The Allocation of Science and Research Funding 2011-12 to 2014-15', December 2010, p.17, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422477/bis-10-1356-allocation-of-science-and-research-funding-2011-2015.pdf; Department for Business, Innovation & Skills, 'The Allocation of Science and Research Funding 2016-17 to 2019-20', March 2016, p.6, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/505308/bis-16-160-allocation-science-research-funding-2016-17-2019-20.pdf

and social sciences. Overall across all disciplines (including the life and physical sciences) the UK secured 17.3%. In the 2016 Consolidator Grants round UK-based researchers in the humanities and social sciences secured 24.3% of all the awards. Overall across all the disciplines the UK secured 18.5%. In the 2017 Advanced Grants round, 28.3% of the awards went to UK-based researchers in the humanities and social sciences. Overall across all disciplines, the UK secured 24.5%.

Across all disciplines there have been 1,869 UK-based ERC award holders. Around half of these have been non-UK nationals. The top three non-UK nationalities with ERC awards based in the UK have been from Germany, Italy and the USA. The last illustrates the pull that an ERC award has even for academics based in the USA, as the conditions and possibilities of the grant are seen as so attractive. In addition, since its establishment 72 British Academy Fellows have won ERC awards.

Why is the ERC a premier mechanism for global frontier research?

Awards from the ERC are highly sought after and distinctive; as one of the ERC award holders put it in correspondence with the British Academy.

“This is simply the European Champions League of research grants”

(Consolidator Grant award holder⁸).

Why is this? The ERC supports excellent frontier research without any pre-conditions on what should

be funded. The ERC’s approach could almost be described as risk-friendly so long as mitigation strategies are shown to have been considered. One UK university recommends to prospective applicants within its institution for ERC schemes ‘to be adventurous, take risks and pursue “cutting edge” research’.

The ERC trusts that those best placed to decide where **excellent frontier research** can be pursued are researchers working in those very fields. The National Academies have a similar role in the UK but at a far more limited scale and scope than those of the ERC. The ERC’s mission to support solely frontier research is different from that of the research councils in the UK, which have a very important role in a mixed funding landscape but one that focuses also on thematic and challenge-oriented research, particularly in recent years with the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund and the Global Challenges Research Fund.

“I love the focus in the ERC on the idea and on doing the very best you can with such flexibility. It is also a great motivator.”

(Starting Grant award holder)

The ERC’s focus on high-risk, high-gain research ideas that have the potential for considerable impact is clearly very attractive to academics. This focus also allows for a scale of **ambition** that is not possible with funding sources available in the UK. That ambition is matched with **flexibility** and **freedom**. ERC awards are provided to investigators personally. This allows the Principal Investigator considerable scope to make changes to the award as the research develops and as findings and

⁸ ‘Award holders’ quoted here and below are researchers who currently have or have had an ERC award.

new collaborations move the research in novel directions. In addition, the Principal Investigator can take the award with them wherever they wish to within the EU and Associated Countries. This institutional and intellectual freedom has been particularly highlighted by ERC award holders.

The ERC “is very open, you don’t need to make your ideas fit pre-set categories. There is also a very positive attitude to high-risk, high-reward research which is very exciting and appealing”
(Starting Grant award holder)

The **length of the award** of up to five years is far longer than the UK norm of around 2-3 years, particularly in the humanities and social sciences. This provides space to experiment and trial theories and methods without having to have concerns about short-term impact. It allows the award holders enough time to build a team and offer more long-term employment than often available in the UK and training, especially for early career researchers and postgraduates, in a precarious job market. The **scale of the funding** on offer is also unprecedented, especially for individuals in the humanities and the social sciences. The scale and scope of the research with a multi-year, multi-team capacity allows for a level of ambition not feasible elsewhere. This is not just in Europe; it also compares well with the possibilities in the USA.⁹ Our discussions with ERC award holders have made clear that ERC awards are of paramount importance in attracting researchers to the UK to continue their research and enabling UK universities to retain these excellent researchers in the UK. In many respects the UK is envied for its involvement in the ERC:

“I was deciding whether to move to Europe from my tenured job at an Ivy league American university. The ERC grant was the only way to make the offer from UK universities competitive with the conditions offered in the USA”

(Consolidator Grant award holder)

This is the case across the career cycle, but the availability of Starting Grants for **early career researchers** at this scale and scope is of particular note, especially for the humanities and social sciences. In these disciplines the awards for early career researchers are more attractive even than those offered by the National Science Foundation in the USA, which enables the ERC to attract excellent researchers from all over the world to come and build their careers and networks in Europe. This focus on early career researchers by the ERC is a decision made by the ERC’s Scientific Council, which has provided a level of opportunity for such researchers that is not replicated in the UK’s current provision of regular short-term contracts for postdoctoral researchers moving from grant to grant often with little job security, and shorter term much more limited fellowship opportunities. The ERC’s focus on the next generation of excellent researchers is of particular note as can be seen in the graph on page 8.

In addition, ERC awards panels are asked to pay close attention to **gender**, and the awards have helped to enable women at the top of their careers or with considerable promise to develop a new scale of opportunity, including through building their own teams and networks with an important progressive effect in the humanities and social

⁹ Simon Goldhill, ‘Interdisciplinary collaborative research in British universities post-Brexit’, British Academy Review, No. 31, Autumn 2017, <https://www.britac.ac.uk/interdisciplinary-collaborative-research-british-universities-post-brexit>

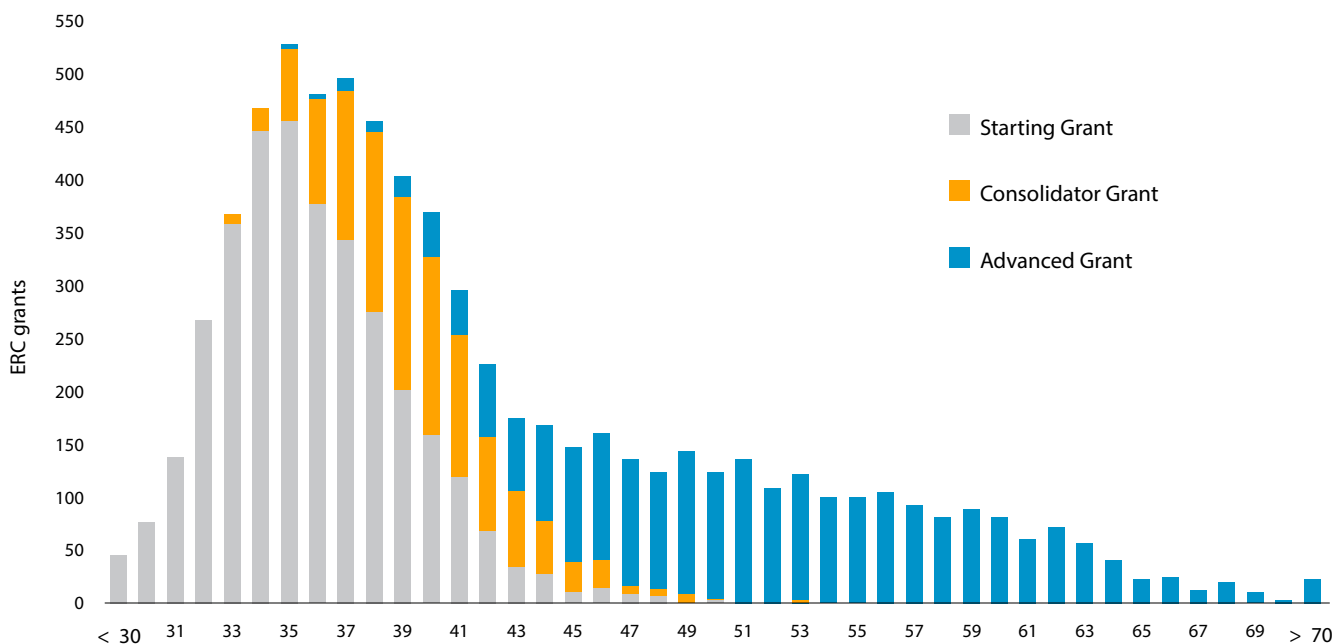
sciences. In Starting Grants from 2007-16, 44% of applicants and 40% of award holders have been women. In Consolidator Grants from 2013-16, 42% of applicants and award holders have also been women. The success rates of men and women for the UK in Starting and Consolidator Grants have also been roughly equivalent between 2007-16.

“People look at you with respect when you tell them you have an ERC grant – being a woman in a male-dominated discipline this is important”
(Starting Grant award holder)

All of the above points are vital in both attracting the very best to apply for ERC awards and attracting

excellent researchers to come together in **teams** and **collaborations** through ERC awards. In the humanities and social sciences, this ability to put together teams that are large by the standards of these disciplines is of particular importance in understanding the distinctive value of the ERC. ERC awards will usually be the first time that researchers, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, have had the chance to build such teams that enable research to take place at a much greater scale. The links across teams and collaborations with partners in Europe and elsewhere made possible by ERC funding are at a scale and depth that ensures they have significant lasting effects for the international networks of award holders and their institutions

Priority to young scientists:
age of ERC grantees at application
(ERC calls 2007-2016)



European Research Council, ‘Annual Report on the ERC activities and achievements in 2017’, 26 March 2018, p. 26, https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document/file/erc_annual_report_2017.pdf

in ways that would be very difficult to develop with domestic funding alone. They also enable the building of teams and collaborations across disciplines, a process in which the ERC, with its emphasis on the benefits of **interdisciplinary** research, is particularly supportive.

“Given the scale of the funding and the numbers involved, the project acted as a kind of magnet, drawing in many doctoral and postdoctoral research affiliates who came in with their own funding. Much of the added value lay in the diverse contributions of these affiliates.”

(Advanced Grant award holder)

Since its establishment, the ERC has built a reputation for globally excellent frontier research. This is due in part to all of the factors described above but also to the autonomy of its Scientific Council and the decisions it has made, as well as the consciously international nature of its awards panels, making it possible for panels to take decisions that may break with national research traditions and practices. In addition, many national research agencies use the ERC as a way of awarding their own grants, in an acknowledgement of the excellence such competitions attract, and the international rigour of the peer review provided. The ERC not only brings a **diversity** to the UK research base in award holders but also to UK institutions’ research cultures and practices. In particular through the experience and prestige offered to UK-based academics by being involved in its research assessment and evaluation, providing additional global networking, **leadership** and prestige for the UK research community. Such leadership opportunities are illustrated by the fact that UK-based researchers have participated more than any other country as experts for ERC peer review as can be seen in the graph on page 10.

To receive an ERC grant is a mark of recognition that denotes a global visibility, public profile and **prestige** that similar domestic funding in the UK cannot provide. An example of this is highlighted above in the ability for ERC award holders to attract the very best from all over the world to come and work with them, a process, and benefits, that continues even after an ERC award finishes. It is also noted in the number of prizes that ERC award holders have gone on to win in acknowledgement of the world-leading nature and achievement of the research funded. The global visibility and prestige of an ERC award have a major impact on researchers’ **careers** well beyond what domestic funding can provide. For early career researchers it provides opportunities for long-term employment that are often difficult to find in the UK. It also opens doors for promotions whilst enhancing one’s employability and job stability. ERC awards provide an international kitemark that is not mirrored or easily replicable by domestic funding:

“The grant is a game-changer in terms of opening up research opportunities and in terms of visibility and prestige.”

(Consolidator Grant award holder)

“Getting an award from the ERC is probably the best thing that has ever happened to me professionally and the grant has also been of immense benefit to my institution, not just by generating research income, but more importantly by greatly enhancing our research culture and international profile. If UK academics no longer have access to ERC funding as a result of Brexit, this will in my view be an unmitigated disaster for research in the UK.”

(Advanced Grant award holder)

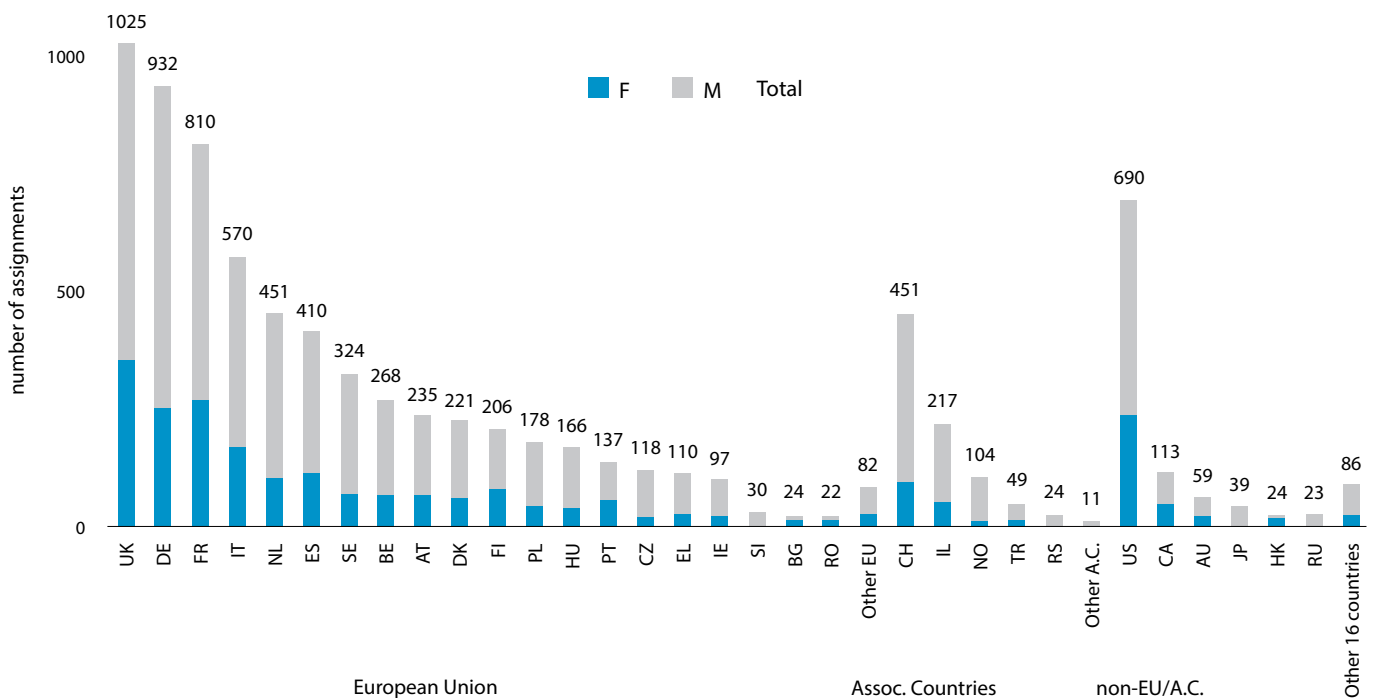
The UK and the ERC in Future

With the UK leaving the EU and negotiations continuing on the shape of the UK's future relationship with the EU this is an uncertain time in UK academia, as UK-based ERC award holders have made clear to us. As the UK negotiates its future relationship with the EU, the regular course of research life continues. This includes the ERC and the attractions it holds for researchers, particularly

those in the humanities and the social sciences in the UK who have been the most successful in gaining awards. This leads to challenges in the here and now, as the UK defines its future relationship with the EU.

ERC awards are portable. Any award holder can in principle relocate with their award to another country in the EU or an Associated Country at any time. As yet, there is no significant trend of ERC award holders moving away from the UK. In 2016, the last year with available data, there was a small increase in the number of award holders moving

International evaluation panels:
 number of times that experts participated in ERC peer review, by host country
 29% of participations were from women
 (ERC calls 2007-2017)



European Research Council, 'Annual Report on the ERC activities and achievements in 2017', 26 March 2018, p. 26, https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document/file/erc_annual_report_2017.pdf

away from the UK in comparison with previous years. We are aware that current non-UK based ERC award holders considering relocating have been cautioned that the UK would not be an available country to move to post-Brexit. This indicates that the current uncertainty could already be acting to the UK's detriment despite the UK government's guarantee with respect to funding for the remainder of Horizon 2020 after the UK leaves the EU.

Understandably, the ERC is continuing and will continue its programmes regardless of the UK's membership of the EU. The ERC Scientific Council has requested a doubling of its budget for Framework Programme 9 so that it reaches €4 billion per annum.¹⁰ This continuity provides unique opportunities for researchers based in the UK and elsewhere in the world to apply for awards in ways that, as described above, are immensely attractive to researchers. This will mean that researchers here in the UK will continue to be able to apply for ERC awards. The key change will be the requirement that they would have to hold their award elsewhere in the EU or in an Associated Country if the UK is not an Associated Country. Similarly, researchers of any nationality, including from the UK based elsewhere in Europe or the wider world, will also continue to be able to apply for ERC awards. Again, the only requirement would be that they move to an EU or Associated Country, which would not in that case be the UK if the UK is not able to fully associate as the Government has now requested the option to do so.

Considering that around half of all UK-based ERC award holders are non-UK nationals, many of whom have moved to the UK with their award, this is

likely to result in a very disadvantageous situation for the UK in the shape of a major outflow of international research talent. It would encourage excellent researchers here in the UK, including UK nationals and residents, to move abroad and it would make excellent researchers based elsewhere in the world less likely to consider the UK as a potential destination for their research base. In addition, there would be many UK researchers who will simply not be able to move overseas for whatever reason to take up an ERC award and thus will lose the ability to apply and take the opportunity such awards provide. This will, of course, open up opportunities for other countries to take up the funding from the ERC that the UK has been securing and the ERC will lose from its applicant pool some of the most talented researchers at some of the most excellent research institutions in Europe. Continuing uncertainty will be detrimental in this respect and so the UK Government's request to have the option to negotiate full association to the next Framework Programme is an important step in taking matters forward.

As has been shown above, many international researchers (European and non-European) are only enticed to relocate to the UK due to ERC awards, and ERC awards have important multiplier effects in attracting such international researchers to high-quality UK institutions.

“Dropping out of the ERC scheme will in my view have a disastrous impact on the UK academic sector, in particular at the highest end of top scholars. The attraction of ERC grants may well

¹⁰ European Research Council Scientific Council, 'Building on a European Success Story to Further Empower European Researchers: Statement by the ERC Scientific Council on the position of the European research Council in the next European Union Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, 15 May 2017, <https://erc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/content/pages/pdf/ERC-ScC-Statement-FP9.pdf>

convince many to change to [other] European institutions”

(Advanced Grant award holder)

It is not only the lost opportunity to apply for ERC awards that will be detrimental to UK research. Involvement in the ERC opens UK-based researchers to more international research cultures, gives greater exposure to cutting-edge research and greater diversity of theoretical and methodological expertise. This has an enriching effect on the quality and breadth of UK research. These possibilities will not be entirely lost without the ERC, but they will be diminished significantly through loss of full involvement to one of the world-leading mechanisms for outstanding frontier research - an area in which the UK's humanities and social sciences currently excel and should continue to do so. It will also mean a loss of significant institutional funding.

In addition, ERC awards, especially in the humanities and social sciences, provide a locus for developing interdisciplinary cross-national teams and collaborations, which attract talented researchers to work here in the UK. This has a catalytic effect through the ERC's prestige in attracting other researchers, particularly early career researchers, to work here in the UK and build their careers here thereafter. This can often be with additional funding from other EU or non-UK sources, and the attraction to work with ERC award holders continues after the award itself has finished. This leads to a virtuous circle whereby talented researchers come to the UK to work on ERC awards or with ERC award holders, continue to work here in the UK, and then apply for additional ERC funding here in the UK, thereby further reinforcing the excellence of UK research in the humanities and social sciences.

The ERC is a competitive research mechanism through which the very best researchers in the world compete to gain funding. Up to now, researchers based in the UK or who plan to come to the UK with their award have been very successful in their applications. That is testament not only to the excellence of the UK research base but also to applicants wishing to be based in the UK and UK institutions' current ability to hone such skills in competitions such as the ERC. Without fully associating to the ERC such competition in the ERC such competition would be difficult to generate through domestic schemes. At a time when global research competition is increasing, excluding the UK research base from the ERC, one of the world's flagship mechanisms for research excellence can only be detrimental to the UK's future ability to compete and collaborate with the very best worldwide.

To be fully part of the ERC once the UK leaves the EU, the UK must become an Associated Country to the entirety of the EU's Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. The Prime Minister's announcement this month that the UK wishes to have the ability to fully associate to Framework Programme 9 is an important stepping stone in this regard. Third Country status does not allow for involvement in the ERC and a national implementing arrangement provides only very limited opportunities to join at a post-award stage in a limited number of ERC awards usually for young scientists.

The weight of evidence and experience strongly indicate the value to the UK research base of securing the closest achievable status of association with the European Research Council once the UK leaves the EU. This absolutely cannot be taken for granted. The UK needs to work intensively with our European partners to negotiate this outcome as a major priority for the future excellence and vibrancy of the UK research base.

The British Academy

The UK's independent national academy representing the humanities and social sciences. For over a century it has supported and celebrated the best in UK and international research and helped connect the expertise of those working in these disciplines with the wider public. The Academy supports innovative research and outstanding people, influences policy and seeks to raise the level of public understanding of some of the biggest issues of our time, through policy reports, publications and public events. The Academy represents the UK's research excellence worldwide in a fast-changing global environment. It promotes UK research in international arenas, fosters a global approach across UK research, and provides leadership in developing global links and expertise.

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